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AUTHOR Wirkus, Tom E.
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ABSTRACT

An instructor developed audio-stimulus activities for use with students and colleagues after attending conferences and short courses where similar activities were conducted. After listening to a tape-recorded "typical scenario" (different for each audience), participants answer a few questions about the scenario. Small groups of students then develop, script, record, and write questions for their own scenarios. Suitable for any middle, secondary, university, or technical college, audio-response activities fulfill the following objectives: (1) work creatively and cooperatively in a group; (2) develop practice in writing; (3) gain an outlet for oral communication practice; and (4) provide practice in presentational skills. (RS)

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AN AUDIO-STIMULUS ACTIVITY TO FOCUS ON LISTENING FOR DETAILS

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Tom E. Wirkus, Ph.D.
Department of Speech Communication
University of WI-La Crosse
La Crosse, WI 54601

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An Audio-Stimulus Activity to Focus on Listening for Details

My interest in audio-stimulus activities in relation to listening instruction began about fifteen years ago when I attended a Central States Communication Association convention in Chicago. A program on listening featured what Tel-Star, Inc., of St. Paul, Minnesota, was developing for use in schools and businesses. One of the exercises, using a business setting, was "The Plant Visitor." Following the listening of the tape, audience members responded to ten questions--some of which required making inferences.

A couple of years after this experience, I attended a Listening short course at a convention of the Speech Communication Association. Again audience members participated in an oral stimulus activity that was being used in organizational structures. The program was presented by George Tuttle of Illinois State University (a member of ILA) and Johnny Murdock, then the assistant state fire marshall of Illinois. The narrative was labeled a "mini-script" and short course participants were asked to respond to five questions after listening to dialog from an office scene.

I began using these scripts and had students and/or colleagues participate in recording the messages on audio tape. The tapes were first used in a listening unit in the basic speech communication course and later in listening seminars and workshops. Some years ago I began to develop more "tailored" audio-stimulus activities to accommodate more effectively the various audience members with whom I was working.

For example, when I taught a listening course for noncommissioned officers at Fort McCoy, near Sparta, Wisconsin, I devised a narrative and follow-up questions that simulated a military office scene. When that seemed relatively successful, I developed a narrative and a set of questions that focused

on a Monday morning school situation and used it with a group of Head Start teachers. Much to my delight, the same scenario worked well later with a group of elementary teachers for an in-service program. Obviously, audiences are more "tuned in" when they can participate in an activity that has relevance to their work.

For the past seven years I have taught a listening course at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. For one of the two group course projects, the class has been divided into groups of from 3-7 (students grouped according to major or common interests). This grouping was communicated relatively early in the semester thus providing students with ample time for meetings. Each group was instructed to create a narrative related to the members' intended profession/occupation. Thus, secondary education majors were placed together, social work and psychology majors together, and so on. The task of each group was outlined: create a realistic and meaningful listening situation, script the situation, develop sensible questions to ask concerning the narrative, and record the scene--using whatever voices and sound/music effects that would enhance the reality and accuracy of the situation.

Such a project, as I see it, could be utilized by any middle, secondary, university, or technical college instructor or by a seminar facilitator. Teachers could encourage students to select situations to which the class could relate (a classroom experience, a media center experience, a pep assembly, a social gathering place in the school or in the community, etc.). Such an audio-stimulus activity could fulfill the following objectives:

1. Work creatively and cooperatively in a group setting (especially noteworthy in a period when collaborative learning and its "joint intellectual effort" philosophy has become quite popular);

2. Develop practice in writing with some attention being directed to appropriate word choice and proper punctuation;

3. Gain an outlet for oral communication practice with the recording phase (determining appropriate voices, selecting sound effects, music, etc.);

4. Develop sensible questions to ask that will address the narrative situation; and

5. Provide further practice in presentational skills by means of the final explanation and listening of the project for peer and for the classroom teacher and/or others.

Each of these objectives or benefits relate to communication goals that English, Language Arts, or Speech Communication teachers desire to instill in their students. This activity can also prove to students that learning and improving listening acuity can be fun!

Today I have brought a couple of the better group projects that were submitted as a result of the assignment in my Listening course. Response sheets will be provided and then you will be asked to listen to the audio-taped narrative and to answer the questions. We'll then check ourselves to see how effective we were in listening to details.

NOTE: There may be a word or two in the script(s) that you would alter, depending on the age of the students or other audience members for whom the narrative would be used.

[Copies of the narrative and the answer sheets will be available at the close of today's program.]

AUDIO TAPE PLAYS: "Jeffrey's Dilemma," "Paul's Pizza Parlor," "Miss Rogers' Credit".

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Tom E. Wirkus, Ph.D., Professor, Speech Communication/Theatre Arts, 348 Fine Arts Building, UW-La Crosse, La Crosse, WI 54601. (608) 785-6709 [O]; 784-7799 [H].